important point in the warfare between the northern Empire of Christophe and the southern Republic of Pétion is well known, since the boundary between the two, never definitely fixed, might be roughly considered as the Artibonite, control of which, as always, depended on also obtaining control of the strategic hills about the town.[11] It is not possible to discover more than approximate figures for the population of Mirebalais at the present time, since no census of the district has been made, and the most recent figure of 51,000 for the commune is derived from the baptismal records in the parish church.[12]

From the earliest years of settlement of the valley, the town has been the center of its life. The government of the commune is located here; here the courts sit; and here the best schools and the only church of the district are found. Yet it is a small town, numbering less than two hundred and fifty houses, and crossed by but three principal thoroughfares stretching north and south, with ten or twelve cross-lanes. The houses on the principal streets, rectangular and small, are built of wood, plastered over with clay, painted, and roofed with sheet iron. On the outskirts of the town the roofing is of straw, or banana-leaf thatch, while the walls themselves are made of twilled wythes. No house lacks its veranda, however small, where people may be seen sitting late of an afternoon and early in the evening, but the life of the women is lived chiefly in the courtyards behind these houses that line the streets, where the cookhouses are found and the storehouses, and where all work is done. The *place*, or town square, lies at the point where the principal route between Port-au-Prince and the Dominican border turns sharply to the east. Consisting of an acre or two of cleared land, it is overgrown with weeds except when, in preparing for festive occasions, the prisoners from the town jail may be seen spending long hours, machetes in hand, cutting the grass, a few blades at a time. North of the square stands the church, a substan-

3:_Leyburn Z-4,5 (no date) 1966
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195 ex-slave, each of whom aroused his own group to fight off the 129 invading Spaniards and English.
669

These two men emerging from the maelstrom were the cultured colored general, Rigaud, and the powerful Negro, Toussaint. United in purpose in 1793, they soon began to oppose each other. Their discord foreshadowed the rift which was permanently to divide free Haiti.

175 Rigaud, born at Les Cayes in 1761,* had been brought up in 159 Bordeaux, France, where he was taught the trade of a goldsmith. 669 Like many other colored colonial youths, he went briefly to Georgia to fight on the side of the Americans in their revolution against England. Gifted with extraordinary military talent, he rose to prominence in Saint-Domingue following the slave insurrection, and played a major part in expelling the British from the colony. He was fiery, intellectual, and brilliant, but lacking in self-control and political subtlety, which put him at a disadvantage with Toussaint. Rigaud's admirers—almost the whole body of free colored people—included all the influential persons in the colony once the whites had been cowed or driven out; the South was devoted to him body and soul, and he had numerous partisans in the provinces of the North and West. But Toussaint was the idol of the half-million blacks.

Born a slave, Toussaint was fortunate in having a kindly master who permitted him the sort of work which gave him leisure for reading. He studied eagerly, devouring all accounts he could find of the military exploits of Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar. Apparently he took no part in the slave uprising; on the contrary, he helped his master escape to the United States and later regularly provided him with money. Then he himself went to the Spanish part of the island, where he made a military reputation in the Spanish colonial army. When General Laveaux sought his aid against the invaders of harassed Saint-Domingue, the ex-slave accepted his overtures. Detractors of Toussaint call him a "cunning hypocrite" for joining and then deserting the Spaniards, and for accepting high rank under a French general whom he was even then (so it is asserted) planning to supersede. His decision to return to Saint-Domingue was certainly crucial, for it began his meteoric ascent to power.

[648] Accompanied by the black troops he had captained in the Spanish

[1632] [364] * Les Cayes, the third largest town in modern Haiti, was even in colonial times an important seaport. It is located on the southwestern peninsula.

3: Leyburn Z-4,5 (no date) 1966
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XIII

CONSTITUTIONS AND POLITICAL FORMS

QUITE aside from its castes and the political separation of 1807–20, Haiti has always consisted of two nations, one living in and near the towns and so within reach of established government, the other rural and yet capable of ordering its own affairs by folk rules without much actual governmental machinery. It is through the former that Haiti has a political history. Indeed, one is tempted to say that more than half the people have continually got along without any government whatever of a formal sort, for being peaceably inclined they have found custom and usage sufficient for their needs. These people have been rarely disturbed by the state's rulers; revolutionary chieftains alone have found it worth their while to stir up the country folk to an active interest in politics.

The formal subdivisions of Haiti have been, through most of its history, three: the *commune*, roughly corresponding to the American township; the *arrondissement*, a group of communes, just as the American county is a group of townships; and the *département*, comprising several arrondissements. All three terms were borrowed from France, although their significance was altered when applied to the Haitian scene.

In the days of Toussaint, Dessalines, and Christophe, the government had owned vast plantations which were under the control of the military. Pétion and Boyer instituted the commune by combining numerous estates and farms into a group likewise to be controlled by soldiers. Until the American Occupation the police system of the country was military, with ordinary soldiers keeping order and making arrests when necessary. Since few people are less given to disorder than the Haitian peasants, the task of keeping order was not a serious one; indeed, soldiers were frequently stationed among their friends and relatives, who never thought of them as police. It sometimes happened, however, that soldiers were assigned to other parts of the country, where they swaggered about with their *commandeurs* (heavy-jointed canes), using these or the flat of their swords to enforce their often arbitrary commands.

In every commune recognized by the state was an important

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In every commune recognized by the state was an important

official appointed by the president—the *juge de paix*. The term has little relation to our "justice of the peace." It implies rather the function performed by the old English country squire, who often by his prestige managed to patch up differences between neighbors without allowing matters to come to an issue, but who if the issue were joined sat as judge. The decision of the judge was final in all civil matters up to fifty dollars—and the case was rare in which peasants dealt in affairs as large as this. In the more populous communes (those containing large villages or towns) the juge de paix was more impersonal. He might render decisions, subject to appeal, in cases up to a hundred dollars. All minor police cases came within the province of this official, whose judgment was final in matters up to a twelve-dollar fine or a jail sentence of five days. All criminal cases began with this judge, but those of the gravest sort were speedily sent to higher courts.

By and large rural Haiti got along with a minimum of civil government, and urban Haiti was governed much as a small provincial town of the nineteenth century.

Several communes made an arrondissement, another political subdivision with a distinct military cast. Through most of her history Haiti had an average of about twenty of these arrondissements, each of them presided over by an army officer of high rank appointed by the president. In arrondissements containing important capitals a general, in lesser ones a brigadier-general, exercised both military and civil authority. This man was the medium through which the central government made known its decisions and laws. Because life could be tedious in a dull country town, in a district full of peaceful peasants, many of the generals spent their time in reflecting upon the chances of a successful insurrection which might make them important in national affairs. As already noted, the standard of discipline in the army was never very high, so that the presiding officer of an arrondissement might have a real sinecure if he was not ambitious.[1]

1. The military arrondissement always bore the name of the principal town or village within its borders. The following list shows the important places during the time of Boyer:
In the department of the North there were five arrondissements: Cap-Haïtien, Grande-Rivière, Marmelade, Fort Liberté, Limbé.
In the Northwest, three: Port-de-Paix, Cap Nicolas Môle, Le Borgne.
In the Artibonite, three: Saint-Marc, Gonaïves, Miragoâne.
In the West, three: Port-au-Prince, Jacmel, Léogane.
In the South, five: Les Cayes, Jérémie, Aquin, Tiburon, Nippes.